



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

PUBLICATIONS

OF THE

Modern Language Association of America

1914

VOL. XXIX, 4

NEW SERIES, VOL. XXII, 4

XX.—BALLAD, TALE, AND TRADITION: A STUDY
IN POPULAR LITERARY ORIGINS

To anyone who has followed the development of the theory of ballad-origins, it is well known that there are two main theories in the field for our suffrages at the present time: the communal; and the individualistic, literary, or anti-communal theory. The last name of the second theory is indicative of the attitude of its upholders, for they have in truth been largely occupied with a criticism of the communalists, always demanding of them more and ever more light, and ever, like doubting Thomas, refusing to believe until an actual ballad dating from at least the time of Hereward the Wake is produced for their fingers to touch. The communalists, by an appeal to the well-established facts of folk-lore and ethnology, maintain that the ballads are the product of the communal stage of society in Europe, in which the populace held festive dances, and in which there was actual improvisation of certain traditional lyric narratives. These narratives had their verse-form determined by the dance; and the whole poem from

beginning to end was the product of the people, and was not in any way composed by literary persons. Moreover, these ballads have been handed down by oral tradition, and live in the mouths of the people. Of course, there is no claim that one expects to find in the ballads of the collections anything which springs directly from the ancient source; all that is claimed is that the poetic form is handed down, and, so to say, the general ballad tradition. This claim of long descent is substantiated by the very features of the ballads as they exist to-day; by their impersonality, their refrain, their depicting of but a single situation, their use of incremental repetition. Thus, it is maintained, the ballad is not derived from any pre-existing literary material, but is the result of a primary impulse which is as old as man, and out of which the various forms of communal poetry spring. Finally, the ballad is not connected with the popular tale; "it follows an entirely different line and springs from an entirely different impulse."¹

To all of this the individualists reply that the method of the communalist begs the question:

"An opinion is widely prevalent among folklorists," they say, "that since ballads come down to us by tradition, they represent poetry in its most primitive forms, and that the character and origin of the ballad can only or best be determined by a comprehensive study of the poetry of those races that are least civilized. This is not merely to beg the whole question; it is to manipulate facts to adapt them to a theory; for even a cursory knowledge of the poetry of the least civilized races is sufficient to show that it has little in common, as regards form, with the modern ballad; and it is assumed on no evidence, and in the face of all likelihood, that the modern ballad has, in the course of ages, been transformed into its present shape by what is vaguely termed the fancy or com-

¹ F. B. Gummere, *The Popular Ballad*, 1907, pp. 16-61, 68-71. George Lyman Kittredge, *Introduction to the Cambridge Edition of Child's English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 1904.

bined genius of the folk. On this theory, also, ballads do not deteriorate, but improve, by folk recital, provided the folk be sufficiently unsophisticated or illiterate; and the modern deterioration of ballads is caused by contact with the corrupting influences of modern civilization."²

But even among nature-folk, the anti-communalists continue, poetry is the product of gifted individuals; this phrase "heart of the people" is a vile phrase, and so are all its kinsmen, such as "popular imagination," or "folk fancy." "The majority of surviving ballads are historical, and therefore comparatively recent," and the fact that "the large number of what may be termed romantic ballads are plainly related in some way to romances, must be regarded as strong presumptive evidence against the very early origin of any existing ballads."³ Finally, the anti-communalists bring in the argument of fact and say, "We can only take the ballads as we find them, and it is a waste of time to argue about the characteristics of productions which no one has ever heard, and whose very existence depends upon bare conjecture."⁴

It would be a waste of time to show how completely in the main Professor Gummere and the late Andrew Lang have met the objections of those who oppose the communal theory. But, while this is true, it may not be unprofitable to show where the defences of the communalists are weak and where their assumptions seem to be scantily supported by facts. This may be done under two main heads:

1. The communalists have persistently maintained that the ballad is a thing apart, and have neglected to deal with it in connection with the other forms of popular art, such

²T. H. Henderson, *Preface* to his edition of Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

³J. H. Millar, *Literary History of Scotland*, 1903, p. 182.

⁴J. H. Millar, *Literary History of Scotland*, 1903, p. 182.

as popular tale and popular drama, which were developed among the people out of whose general life the ballad also arose. Thus they have dwelt upon certain characteristics of the ballad which differentiate it from cultivated poetry, but in no wise differentiate it from related forms of popular art. To correct this, it is necessary to dwell on its similarity to related forms, and so to deal with the general conditions under which popular art originates. As the quotation from Professor Gummere shows, they neglect the prose popular tale in particular, evidently holding as an axiom the priority of poetry over prose.

2. While they have made excellent use of anthropological evidence, they have placed too great trust in it, and have neglected to recognize the fact that the ballad "as we have it" is an European product and develops in a certain environment, within a rather fixed social complex; and can be explained only by a strict reference to the conditions of the age in which the ballad originated and developed. In the case of the ballad, this means that, while anthropological considerations are most valuable, the ballad as we have it and as it is defined in standard discussions of the English ballad must be studied in its origin in mediæval Europe in connection with those social activities which led to its origin.

I

THE POPULAR TALE AND POPULAR DRAMA

As has been said, despite the fact that much has been written about ballads and folk-tales, very little attention has been paid to their relations. This may be partially accounted for by the different paths by which ballad and folk-tale have come into the ken of scholars. The ballad

came by way of poetry, and so naturally became the centre of interest as the possible source of epic, drama, lyric, and what not. The folk-tale, however, was not admitted into the literary holy temple so readily, for it came as a foreigner and outlandish heathen, as it were, from the country of mythology and religion. So persistent was the belief that folk-tales were the broken-down forms of myth that M. Emmanuel Cosquin, in the preface to his *Contes de Lorraine*,⁵ had to fight for his assertion that tales were tales and not myths in any form whatsoever.

The prevailing opinion is well exemplified by Professor Gummere's statement of his conception of the relation between ballad and tale, when he says:

Artless narrative is best studied in the popular tale. This märchen, again, itself as old as any aesthetic propensity in man, will do nothing for the origins of balladry; it follows an entirely different line and springs from an entirely different impulse, as any observer can determine for himself who watches the same group of children, now playing "Ring round the Rosy," or what not, singing and shouting in concert with clasped hands and consenting feet, not sitting silent, absorbed, while some one tells them a story. As with the manner, so with the material. No test can be obtained for the ballad by a comparison of its matter with these tales which have long formed the flotsam and jetsam of European narrative. The actual community of subject in ballad and folk-tale is limited. Ballads rest primarily on situation and deed of familiar, imitable type; the popular tale, untrammelled by rhythmic law, by choral conditions, tends to a more subtle motive, a more striking fact, a more unexpected, memorable quality, and a more intricate coherence of events.⁶

It will be the purpose of the first part of this paper to call attention to the importance of the popular tale in solving the riddle of the origin of popular literature in general and of the ballad in particular. This will chiefly consist

⁵ 2 vols., 1886.

⁶ *The Popular Ballad*, pp. 69-70.

in the presentation of evidence for the early origin of the prose tale and of its close connection with the ballad, in that it furnishes an explanation of much of the content of that form, and in that they have very strong resemblances in essential characteristics. This evidence will be furnished by presenting the results of research in certain typical portions of the whole field. The general method has been the anthropological; and as this method, when correctly used, is recognized as valid by all competent students, it requires no defence on the present occasion. It is assumed as proved that the ballad and the tale have an origin in real ideas, customs, and beliefs, and that these ideas, customs, and beliefs are survivals of an earlier stage of thought and living among the more stationary groups of European society, and among whom the tale and ballad are still in circulation.

Among the fundamental assumptions of all savage philosophy is the belief that the present form man wears is accidental and non-essential. To-day he is a man, to-night he may be a wolf; to-morrow a tree. By all the systems of totemism, this change from form to form is taken as beyond question. Now, taking this theme as treated in ballad and folk-tale, what are the results? *The Two Sisters*⁷ is a good example. Briefly, the story as told in the ballad is as follows: Two sisters, the elder dark and the younger fair, are in love with the same young man, and the elder drowns the younger through jealousy. The body floats to the mill-dam, where it is found by a harper, or other person, who takes certain of her bones and other parts of her body and makes a harp, or violin. When the musical instrument is played upon, it speaks and tells of the murder. In certain of the Scandinavian ballads, the

⁷ F. J. Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, No. 10.

harper breaks the instrument, and the younger sister is revived. The prose tales as a whole agree with this, but add some very important particulars. In the first place, certain of them state clearly that the body grows into a tree, and, in the second place, that the instrument is made from this tree, thus completing the cycle of changes of the maiden changed to the tree, and the tree changed to the maiden, and so preserving the idea of transformation in a much clearer form.

Now, it seems reasonable to argue that the form of popular literature which preserves any belief, or custom, or ritual most clearly must be the earliest in origin, or at least must have the closest relationship with the belief, or custom, or ritual. By this test, the folk-tale gives overwhelming evidence of closer connection, for of the sixty European ballads, none present the complete cycle, and only ten (all Scandinavian) present the revival of the dead girl; while of the eighty-four European tales only one is without transformation in some form. Moreover, African, American, Asiatic, and Australasian forms of the story as a rule preserve the complete cycle of transformation in this and similar stories. Geographically, too, the folk-tale is more closely related to the belief. The story is told in ballads only in the north of Europe, while the tale is found in all the continents, except Australia. From the evidence of this one story, we are forced to conclude that the tale has a better claim than the ballad to be considered the more primitive in content.⁸

⁸ Full evidence can be gained from the chief studies of *The Two Sisters* and allied themes: J. and W. Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 1812-1814. No. 28, "Der Singende Knochen," Notes. With notes, 1882, in a third volume; J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 1835, Vol. III, pp. 689-690. Fourth edition. Ed. Meyer, 1878. Eng. trans. Stallybrass, 1882-1888; A. Koberstein, *Über die Vor-*

Even more decisive results are obtained from a study of the cycle of ballads and tales which have to do with the Water of Life and Resuscitation. In the ballads the incident appears very seldom, while it is a commonplace in the popular tale,⁹ occurring times almost without number.

stellung von dem Fortleben menschlicher Seelen in der Pflanzenwelt, Naumburg, 1849, also in *Weimarisches Jahrbuch*, I, pp. 72-100 (Rose and Briar); Reinhold Köhler, Notes to No. 51, *Der Singende Dudelsack* of Laura Gonzenbach: *Sicilianische Märchen*, 1870; Reinhold Köhler, *Weimarisches Jahrbuch*, I, pp. 479-483; Reinhold Köhler, *Herrigs Archiv f. d. Stud. der n. Sprachen*, XVII, p. 444; Reinhold Köhler, *Sitzungsberichte der Wiener Akademie*, XX, p. 94, 1856; E. Grohmann, *Aberglaube aus Böhmen*, pp. 193, 1301, 93, 648; E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, First ed. 1871, 2nd, 1872; W. Mannhardt, *Wald- und Feld-Kulte*, 1874. I. Baumkultus, pp. 3, 39-44; II. *Antike Wald- und Feld-Kulte*, pp. 10-14, 20-23, 61-62, 280; F. J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. 1st Ed., 1860 (very little), New Ed. 1882. No. 10, Introductory study; R. Köhler, *Aufsätze über Märchen und Volkslieder*, 1882, "Die Sprechende Harfe," pp. 79 ff.; H. Gaidoz, *Mélusine*, Vol. IV. Cols. 61-62, 85-91, 142; I. 882, "Les deux Arbres Entrelacés"; Emmanuel Cosquin, *Contes de Lorraine*, I, pp. lix-lxii, 1886; J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Third Ed., Part I, Vol. II, 1911, *passim*; Eugène Monseur, *L'Os qui Chante*, *Bulletin de Folklore Wallon*, I, pp. 89 ff., 1891-2; Grant Allen, *The Attis of Catullus*, 1892, pp. 17-125, *Excursus II*; Charles Ploix, *L'Os qui Chante*, *Revue des Traditions Populaires*, VIII, pp. 129 ff., 1893; E. Sidney Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus*, 1894-6, I, pp. 182-224; Léon Pineau, *Les Vieux Chants Populaires Scandinaves*, Vol. I, 1898; J. A. Macculloch, *The Childhood of Fiction*, 1905, Chap. IV, pp. 80-117; Paul Sébillot, *Le Folk-Lore de France*, Vol. III, sect. 1-9; E. S. Hartland, *Primitive Paternity* (Transformation and Metempsychosis), 2 vols., 1909-10, Chap. III; Arnold van Gennep, *Les Rites de Passage*, 1909, Chap. VI, *Les Rites d'Initiation*; J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part VII, Vol. II, Chaps. X-XII, 1913 (A very complete study of the external soul in folk-tale and folk custom and of totemism).

⁹Typical forms of the story are: For the ballads, Child, Nos. 15 and 272, with the introductions. For the tales, *Europe*:—J. and W. Grimm, *Kinder- und Haus-Märchen*, 1812-1814, with notes, 1824 (No. 97); J. G. von Hahn, *Griechische und Albanesische Märchen*, 1864 (Nos. 22, 32, 37); Asbjørnsen und Møe, *Norse Tales* (No. 35);

Moreover, this incident is the central motif of the most widely spread English and European popular drama, which is known in England as the *St. George Play*, and which is closely related to agricultural spring ceremonies of savages and of people wherever agricultural operations are carried on. This I have shown at length elsewhere;¹⁰ so that it will suffice to say merely that in this case again the ballad barely touches the deep-seated belief of primitive man in the efficacy of magic ceremony and ritual, which is fully developed in drama and tale.¹¹

The place of the tale in the relations with folk thought I have studied by a somewhat different method. Taking as a basis of study the usual ideas of primitive men regarding the government of the world which are distinctly not our civilized ideas and noting the frequency of occur-

G. W. Dasent, *Popular Tales from the North*, 1859 (No. 3); W. R. S. Ralston, *Russian Folk Tales*, 1873 (The Fiend, p. 17, also Chap. iv); J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, 1860-1862 (Conall Gulban, III, p. 66); Lady Charlotte Guest, *The Mabinogion*, p. 39 (Branwen, the Daughter of Llyr); Emmanuel Cosquin, *Contes de Lorraine*, 1886 (Appendice B. p. lx, and No. 17, L'Oiseau de Vérité); Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Notes to No. 15, Leesome Brand; No. 272, Suffolk Miracle). *Other Countries*:—F. A. von Schiefner, *Thibetan Tales*, 1882, p. lxi; R. H. Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa*, 1904, pp. 372-378.

¹⁰ *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters*, Vol. xv, Pt. II, pp. 273-324.

¹¹ General treatises on the story are:—

W. A. Clouston, *Popular Tales and Fictions*, 1887, Vol. II, pp. 407-412, 497-499; J. G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, and Osiris*, 1906; Paul Sébillot, *Le Folk-Lore de France*, Vol. II, 1905 (La mer et les eaux douces); W. Mannhardt, *Wald- und Feld-Kulte*, 1874; Reinhold Köhler, *Kleinere Schriften*, Vol. I, pp. 55, 185, 562, 367, 394, 581; J. A. Macculloch, *The Childhood of Fiction*, 1905. Chaps. III, IV, and V (The work contains references to a great number of tales); Jane Harrison, *Themis*, 1912; *Ancient Art and Ritual*, 1913; H. Dawkins, "The Modern Carnival in Greece," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. XXVI, 1906, p. 191 (On the dramatic treatment of this motif).

rence in ballad and tale, a standard of comparison was established. In the first place, in order to rule out all the peculiarities of the tales of individual countries, comparisons were made between the tales of England, and of Scotland, and of France.¹² The beliefs adopted were: Imposed Tasks and Riddles, Outwitting (by Magic), Helpful Animals, Magical Instruments, Transformation, Resuscitation, Fairies, Ghosts, Giants, Revenants, The Thankful Dead, Speaking Animals and Inanimate Objects, Words of Power (Charms), The External Soul, and Etiological (or Explanatory) motifs; and with surprisingly little variation the approximately proportionate frequency of occurrence of these motifs in any one collection of tales and the English ballads was found to be two to one, while each collection of folk-tales when compared with any other gave the approximate proportion of one to one. The French tale shows a higher proportion of these incidents than either the English or Scottish. This method also shows clearly that the body of European folk-tale has a closer affiliation with fundamental primitive beliefs and practices than has the ballad.

The last primitive element mentioned in the above list must be considered as specially important, as a clue to the possible origin of tales. As we proceed backward to the tales of peoples in the lowest stages of culture, the motif which becomes increasingly important is the etiological, or explanatory, purpose of the story. To all men the world is full of things which demand explanation; and in the

¹² The collections used were as follows: For England, E. S. Hartland, *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales*, 1908; Joseph Jacobs, *English Fairy Tales*, 1904; *More English Fairy Tales*, 1894. For Scotland: J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, 1890. For France: Emmanuel Cosquin, *Contes Populaires de Lorraine*, 1885.

lower cultures this demand is met by resort to etiological stories. Habits of animals, features of the landscape, the stars, the sky, the nature of water, the customs and ceremonies of the tribe, and the thousand other things, are all explained in stories. In other words, the great majority of the tales and traditions which savages tell are scientific hypotheses giving explanations of phenomena which are abundantly satisfying if we accept the assumptions and fundamental outlook of the tellers. This seems to be the origin of *plots*, just as the same impulse is the origin of myths.¹³

As mankind progresses from the earlier stages of culture towards the higher, new attitudes of thought displace the earlier hypotheses, but the story remains and becomes what Professor A. C. Haddon¹⁴ calls a *skeuomorph*, that is, an æsthetic development of a real fact, or object, or phenomenon. In harmony with the changed attitude with regard to the most fundamental principles of the universe would work the principle of natural selection. "It was not art, but happy chance," says Aristotle, "that led poets by tentative discovery to impress the tragic quality upon their plots."¹⁵ And so with the development of plots in general. Primitive and savage stories have many combinations that are singularly infelicitous; and these would be dropped with increasing æsthetic development and literary skill. There can be no doubt that the plots of Euro-

¹³ Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, 1889; Franz Boas, *On the Kwakiutl Indians* (Reports of the U. S. National Museum), 1895. W. Y. Evans Wentz, *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, 1911, collects a great mass of materials which connect the tales and traditions of the Celts. One can admire the method of this book without agreeing with its theories.

¹⁴ *Evolution in Art*, 1895.

¹⁵ *Poetics*, XIV, 9.

pean tales, simple though they be, are the result of a long process of natural selection.¹⁶

Thus, the prose tale has been the form of popular art which has as its primary impulse the telling of a story or plot. The plot may be that of a simple savage tale of explanation, or it may be the more complicated tale of Europe, but in each case the story is there. Now when we turn to the ballad, an interesting fact is seen. In the case of the story of *The Two Sisters*, we noted that among savages the story is *never told in verse*; and the same thing is true of all savage forms of European stories; for the savage poem does not tell a story. It is made up of a simple phrase repeated over and over, accompanied by the dance or other form of bodily movement.¹⁷ On the other

¹⁶ Representative tales of peoples in lowly stages of culture may be found in the following:—G. M. Theal, *Kaffir Folk Lore*, 1882; A. L. Kroeber, "Animal Tales of the Eskimo," in *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, XII, p. 17; Charles Hill-Tout, "Sqaktkquaelt, or the Benign-Faced," *Folk Lore*, X, p. 195. These give materials for a judgment on such savage tales and their very rudimentary idea of a plot. Their structure and length has been best explained by Mr. Theal:—"There is a peculiarity in many of these stories which makes them capable of almost indefinite expansion. They are so constructed that parts of one can be made to fit into parts of the other, so as to form a new tale. In this respect they are like the blocks of wood in the form of cubes with which European children amuse themselves. Combined in one way they represent the picture of a lion, another combination shows a map of Europe, another still, a view of St. Paul's, and so on. So, with many of these tales. They are made up of fragments which are capable of a variety of combinations" (*Op. cit.*, p. vii).

See also Dozon, *Contes Albanais*, xvi; Andrew Lang, *International Folk Lore Congress*, 1891, p. 65; Macculloch, *Childhood of Fiction*, p. 467, and H. A. Junod, *Life of a South African Tribe*, 2 vols., 1913, vol. II, pp. 191-248. The introductory matter and the tales given in this work are of primary importance.

¹⁷ Richard Wallaschek, *Primitive Music*, 1893; Ernst Grosse, *The Beginnings of Art*, 1894, Eng. translation, 1897; Karl Bücher, *Arbeit*

hand, we cannot conceive of the modern ballad as not telling a story. Therefore, if we trace our ballad back through the lower stages of culture we find that the characteristic thing disappears. To be sure, we have rhythm and meaningless words or vocables in the savage song but no *story*; it evaporates, and if we ask where the story is to be found among savages, we answer: "in the prose story." Similarly, if we follow certain Kaffir stories up through the higher stages of culture to Europe, we find them in ballad form as well as in prose form. Now, does this not seem to indicate that, for the ballad at least, the form is not the constant? So it would seem. What is the constant then? The *content*, the *plot*, the *story*. Here we have something which is not only as wide as Europe, but as wide as the world, and which connects not only all the ballads of Europe, but the ballads with those forms of literature which have the same content: the *märchen*, the folk-tales of Europe and Asia, and the tales of savage Africa, Australia, America, and Oceania. Clearly, the question of the origin and diffusion of ballads is not an isolated one, but is connected with the origin and diffusion of popular and savage tales. Some of these connections will be indicated in the second part of this paper.

II

ANTHROPOLOGICAL EVIDENCE AND TRADITION

The second aspect of the ballad problem which we marked out for consideration is the too absolute trust of the communalists on general anthropological evidence, and

und Rhythmus, 3rd Ed., 1909; Yrjö Hirn, *The Origins of Art*, 1900; F. B. Gummere, *The Beginnings of Poetry*, 1901.

their neglect of the actual European conditions in which the ballad developed. This has led to a wholly unwarranted division between the ballad and other popular forms of art, and to the insistence upon certain characteristics as exclusive marks of the ballad, which are, as a matter of fact, shared alike by all traditional art forms, and all methods of popular, traditional thought.

Our knowledge of the ballad is of two sorts: first, our direct knowledge, that which we gain by direct study of the texts themselves, together with the information we possess concerning the conditions of the production of the ballads as we have them; and second, our inferential knowledge, which is derived from study of the various fields of anthropology, archæology, and their allies, and through which we are able to cast upon the problems of ballad origin and development a reflected but very welcome light. By means of the inferential knowledge students of the ballad have been enabled to interpret known facts about that particular kind of poetry and through it to bring our theory of the ballad up to what it now is.

It is not our present purpose to join with those who attack the validity of our knowledge of the ballad which is derived from the second of these sources, nor to question the ultimate propriety of using materials derived from anthropology and archæology, and cry that all we can do is to study the ballad as we have it.¹⁸ Instead, we take it for granted that ballads and tales and folk materials in general are all so similar to the products of peoples in low states of culture that beyond question the ballad problem is illuminated by reference to such. All that this paper attempts is to present some aspects of the problem in the

¹⁸ For instance, J. H. Millar, *Literary History of Scotland*, 1903, p. 82; W. J. Courthope, *History of English Poetry*, Vol. I, 1895.

light of some of the later work in some of these related fields of scientific enquiry and to suggest possible readjustments in discussing it.

First, let the general problem of the ballad be put briefly in its relation to anthropological enquiry. (1) No one who has a true appreciation of the matter would think for a moment of denying that communal, or community, dancing is a characteristic of every people in a low stage of culture. (2) Furthermore, no one who takes account of the evidence would deny that from the earliest times in Europe the people danced in companies. (3) Again, it is just as certain that investigation into the ballad in Europe must connect the ballad-form, and some of its characteristic features, like the refrain, with dancing. More than this, however, we cannot say. That is, between the savage or primitive dance and the European dance there are striking resemblances; but between the savage dances and the particular European dance which produced our ballads there is a great gulf fixed, without any connecting bridge permitting of a free passage from the one to the other. Thus, those like Mr. J. H. Millar,¹⁹ who protest against the slightest tendency to connect directly the *carmina* spoken of by Tacitus and the English chronicles, with our modern ballad form, are justified in a measure. There is little or nothing in any description of any of these *carmina* which warrants us in thinking that they resembled our ballads in form, or had in them the elements which would have necessarily, or probably, developed into our ballad forms.

The same thing is true regarding the dances of the savage people of to-day. There is no record among any of these peoples of a dance or dance-song which even re-

¹⁹ *Literary History of Scotland*, 1903.

motely suggests the precise forms of our European ballads, whether English, or Danish, or French, nor yet which suggests any of the lyric dance-songs of Europe. Moreover, there is small resemblance between the dances and dance-songs of the different primitive or savage peoples themselves; and the constant in all is no specific characteristic, but merely the general idea of dance, or, occasionally, of communal dance. A study of these various dances of present-day savages brings out a fact which must be recognized: namely, that each tribe develops its dances within its own tradition; and when there are specific resemblances, they are to be explained by borrowing. The constant feature is *dancing*, together with the various motives which lead the tribes to dance, whether they be those which lead to initiation rites, magic rites to produce food, or what not. That is, the specific constant is rather a non-æsthetic thing, which has no necessary connection with the dance and which the dance does not exclusively express, as various other practices give these motives expression also.

These underlying motives are much more fundamental than the characteristic of communality; for it is scarcely true that the dance is any more communal in its origin than any of the other activities, beliefs, or practices of primitive folk. The new anthropological school of Durkheim and *L'Année Sociologique* is doing valuable work in insisting on a normative principle in savage life—that of “*représentations collectives*” and “the law of participation”—which brings the whole of the mind of the savage under one law, and precludes excessive attention to any one external manifestation of savage life, such as the dances. Under the scrutiny of Lévy-Bruhl²⁰ dancing re-

²⁰ *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures*, 1910. Important papers of Émile Durkheim are to be found in the volumes

tires into the background, as it does in the recent excellent study of the Thonga tribe of South Africa,²¹ and other things, like customs, rites, laws, tales in prose, and language come to the foreground. In other words, the special development of the tribe is insisted upon, or the special tradition in each case. Herein the anthropology of Durkheim and his school is an advance upon that of Tylor and the English school, as it makes a more searching analysis of the tribal life and emphasizes the *individuality* of each rather than the characteristics which each holds in common with all others, and so subjecting each activity of the tribe to the life of the whole community. And what is it that seems to give to us the best conception of the real life and individuality of the tribe? Not the dance, as has been indicated, but the tales and traditions, customs, and ceremonies. Osarquaq, the Eskimo friend of Knud Rasmussen,²² speaks for the people of lowly culture of every continent and tribe, as well as for every recent anthropologist, whether he be descriptive or theoretical, when he says:

Our tales are men's experiences, and the things one hears of are not always lovely things. But one cannot deck a tale to make it pleasant, if at the same time it shall be true.

The tongue must be the echo of the event and cannot adapt itself to taste or caprice.

To the words of the newly born none give much credence, but the experience of older generations contains truth. When I narrate legends, it is not I who speak; it is the wisdom of our forefathers, speaking through me.

The bearing of this attitude of anthropology on the ballad problem may be easily made clear. Just as the songs

of *L'Année Sociologique*, II, 1898, and in *La Revue de Métaphysique et Morale*, VI, 1898; XVII, 1909.

²¹ Henri Junod, *Life of a South African Tribe*, 2 vols., 1913.

²² *The People of the Polar North*, 1909, p. 97.

and dances of each individual tribe form a problem within the tradition of that particular tribe, so the ballad problem is a specific one. Granted the universal impulse in primitive man to dance, and to dance communally, what are the results for Europe and what are the means by which the results are produced? In the light of savage life and the more recent anthropology, we cannot look upon the ballad as something which is fundamentally unique, and to be explained by certain specific characteristics which it possesses solely. Rather, we must regard it as only one of many manifestations of community life and to be understood only in connection with the whole body of folk-lore within a given tradition.

III

THE ENGLISH BALLAD IN EUROPEAN TRADITION

Let us begin by examining the ballad and enquiring what characteristics have to do with its supposed origin in the *dance*? Not impersonality, nor lack of an author, for that is a peculiarity of all folk-lore products. Proverbs, tales in prose, customs, beliefs, dramas: all these are community products and have nothing to do with the individual; all are as "masterless" as the ballad. Neither can we say that *communality* necessarily connects the ballad with the dance, for communality is the essential process of folk production as well as of primitive man's production; and is as strongly marked in customs, rites, proverbs, and tales as it is in the ballad. The folk play, for instance, carries on traditions quite independently of the ballad, and is as impersonal and as communal as is any of the ballads. Who wrote the various versions of the English play of St. George? The authorship of these is as

impersonal as that of the ballads. Nor, again, can *repetition* be looked upon as a distinct characteristic of the ballad, for that feature is abundantly shared by the folk tale and by the folk rhyme.²³

It would seem that of all the features that have been proposed as characteristic of the ballad, there are only (1) metre of a rather uniform kind (but not wholly so), and (2) *refrain* in various forms. Now, as dance and rhythm are related, and as refrains are rather easily connected with the dance, let us see how some definite connection can be made in Europe. In the first place, where was it made in Europe? That is, have we any clear evidence that the ballad form as we have it to-day did originate in any definite locality? Is there any specific, particular dance to which we can appeal? We must not make any supposed or theoretical connections and identify the *carmina* of Tacitus, of the Germans, or of the Saxon warriors with our ballads. The answer is: Nowhere in Europe have we direct evidence of such origins of still living ballads except perhaps in the Farøe Islands. To the out-and-out communalists, the case of the Farøe Islands can give but small comfort; for since the study of the Farøe Island ballads by Mr. Hjalmar Thuren,²⁴ we possess information of a rather precise sort about them. We learn: (1) that the *tunes* are derived from the Protestant hymn books, and (2) that the important dance (the Kaededansen) is absolutely the same as the mediæval French *branles* as described by Bishop Arbaud in his *Orchésographie*, 1589—the Farøe slow dance corresponding to the French *branle simple*, and the fast dance with the *branle gai*.²⁵ More-

²³ See my paper, *The St. George or Mummers' Play*, in *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters*, Vol. xv, 1907.

²⁴ *Folkесanger paa Faerøerne*, 1906.

²⁵ Thuren, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-51.

over, the work of Olrik, Recke, Steenstrup, Larsen, Ker, and Jeanroy²⁶ makes it quite clear that this resemblance is not merely a fortuitous one, but is the result of a real historical connection between the French and the Scandinavians, for the French *caroles* did about 1100 spread over the north of Europe.

Now, we should note carefully what happened, according to this evidence. The dance and lyric refrains developed in France, possibly beginning under communal conditions, as Wolf maintains,²⁷ but, consciously and artistically elaborated and made more precise, were carried to the Scandinavian countries and there developed the ballad. Now, according to the communal theory, one would have expected the ballad to have developed in France, where these refrains and dances were developed. However, no such thing happened. Instead, the French dance continued, barren and without literary result so far as ballads are concerned, until long after the Scandinavian ballad had flourished, set a new fashion in Europe, and faded. As M. Bédier shows, the French dances developed into "rather complicated ballets."²⁸

It is to be noted, further, that the French influence as far as content and plot are concerned was only partial. For, from the evidence it seems rather clear that the Scandina-

²⁶ Axel Olrik, *Danske Folkeviser i Udvalg*, New Ed., 1913. *Danske Studier*, 1906, pp. 175 ff.; Johannes Steenstrup, *Vore Folkeviser*, 1891. Translated by E. G. Cox, with title *The Medieval Popular Ballad*, 1914; Sofus Larsen, *Tilskueren*, Nov., 1903; Ernst von der Recke, *Nogle Folkeviseredaktioner*, 1906; W. P. Ker, *On the History of the Ballads*, 1909, *Danish Ballads*, in *Scottish Historical Review*, July, 1904, July, 1908; A. Jeanroy, *Origines de la Poésie Lyrique en France*, 1889.

²⁷ Ferdinand Wolf, *Über die Lais*, 1841.

²⁸ R. Meyer, J. Bédier, P. Aubry. *La Chanson de Bele Aëlis, par le trouvère Baude de la Quarière*, 1906.

vian ballad treated the older heroic stuff, such as stories about the God Thor, or about Sigurd; and the ballads which treat of these themes seem to be of an earlier age than those which deal with more nearly contemporary subjects. In this respect, the Scandinavian ballads show continuity of tradition such as our English ballads can in no sense claim. Indeed, as one studies the Danish ballads, one must almost inevitably feel that a number of our English ballads are but far off derivatives from them, written in the general literary tradition of the ballad form.²⁹

Thus, the Faroe and other Scandinavian ballads betray an origin in a definite tradition originating in a borrowed artistic form superimposed on a native form and practice. In the Scandinavian countries this took place about 1100, very soon after that in England, in Germany about 1200, in Spain about 1400, in Italy about the same date, while France had to wait until the latter half of the fifteenth century for anything which can be called a ballad.³⁰ Iceland, be it noted, though exposed to French influence, did not develop ballads of its own. The testimony of Vigfusson and Powell to this effect is supported by the brilliant work of Recke³¹ and Olrik,³² who show that the imperfect rhymes of the Icelandic forms of the Ribold ballad for instance, can be made perfect by the substitution of old Danish words, and thus demonstrate the derivative nature of the Icelandic forms.

If the argument from the refrain be of value as an argument for dance origin, the Danish and Faroe inset refrain is much nearer to the actual conditions of the dance than

²⁹ Sophus Bugge, *The Home of the Eddic Poems*, trans. by W. H. Schofield, 1899.

³⁰ Gaston Paris, *Journal des Savants*, Sept.-Nov., 1889.

³¹ Ernst von der Recke, *Nogle Folkeviseredaktioner*, 1906.

³² Axel Olrik, *Danske Studier*, 1906, pp. 80 and 175; 1907, p. 79.

the ballads of any of the other nations. Some of the English ballads have refrains that strongly resemble the simplest of the Scandinavian, but for the most part they seem to be merely literary refrains having connection with tunes, but not with dances. The same thing applies more particularly to the German, and still more to the Spanish. It would seem that even of the Danish ballads only a few preserve refrains which connect them with the dance; though we may grant that those which do so are the most primitive in form and thereby nearer to the archetype of the ballad. In the great majority of the ballads of Europe, we have literary refrains only distantly recalling the original ancestors and totally ignorant of their high lineage. They are the product of a complicated tradition made up from many sources.³³

As has been already said, the French dance and *carole* did not carry to the north plots and subjects to the exclusion of native subjects and plots. It is impossible to suppose, however, that there has not been some interchange of these between the two regions, on account of the great similarity which exists between the two groups of ballads, a similarity altogether closer than that which exists between the Danish and the English. It is to be noted, however, that the peculiarly Danish heroic local ballad subjects are not to be found in French ballads, nor are the peculiar local French subjects to be found in the Danish. The great common element is made up of beliefs and customs which are likely to be found in any quarter, such as the return from the dead (*The Dead Mother's Return*), transformation (*La Biche Blanche*), drawing of lots (*La Courte Paille*—Thackeray's *Little Billee*), and such like themes.

³³ For the refrain in Danish Ballads, see Steenstrup, *Vore Folkeviser*, Chap. iv, and for English see Gummere, *The Popular Ballad*, pp. 73-74.

However, we must not over-emphasize these likenesses in subject, but rather emphasize the differences in subject. Moreover, when there are likenesses in subject, examination shows that there is a distinct difference in the treatment of the theme in each case, because of the fact that each district has its own distinct tradition. Take as an example the *riddle* ballads, and let us ask: "To what extent can the riddles answer the questions of borrowing or of possible relationship between belief and ballad?" Now, it is useless to conjure with the rod of universality, for of course we know that the riddle is universal in the lower degrees of culture and in European folk-lore, without any demonstration. What we must do is first to remember that the riddle is a traditional form and takes on a particular form within a certain tradition. More than that, the riddle is impersonal, and its answer is frequently absolutely fixed independently of any rational process. This fundamental fact is mentioned here because it has been overlooked by students of riddles.

"What is sharper than the thorn?"

"What is louder than the horn?"

is asked of the maid, and her answer must be within very strict traditional limits, if she is to escape from Satan's clutches. The title of the ballad given by Child, "Riddles Wisely Expounded,"³⁴ is misleading, for the answers require only memory or traditional knowledge and not cleverness, nor skill, nor wisdom in any measure. It is interesting to note that among savages, the answers are still more strictly determined by tradition. M. Junod shows that the Thonga riddles are strictly traditional and "the answers must be learned by heart."³⁵

³⁴ Child, No. 1.

³⁵ H. Junod, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 160-166.

With regard to the *content* of ballads in general—how are we to account for it? Is the ballad form older than the subject, or is the subject matter older than the form? In the great majority of cases undoubtedly the latter is true. Fairies, heroes, ghosts, superstitions,—all the stock subjects and motifs of ballads—is it not plainly true, as we have indicated in the first part of this paper, that all these have been perpetuated in belief, practice, and in prose tales? Have we any account that the Germans danced and sang tales about such things, or about anything save gods and heroes? Clearly not; the *carmina* of which we read in Tacitus were heroic. Now, just as the ballad took up existing heroic material (of which we know from independent sources), so it took up all this other traditional material and incorporated it into itself, adopting the form of the popular story or tradition, and adapting it to its own individual genius. The popular tale, too, and the popular traditions as well, were undergoing a process of growth by a process of borrowing and selection; but the evidence rather clearly indicates that so far as content is concerned, the ballad is the later, secondary form.³⁶

To answer these questions, at least in part, we may have the means before long. Archæologists are doing useful work in this direction, and what may come from a study of the remains of older civilization of Europe, and of the wonderful cave of Altamira and other caves in Pyrenean and Northern Spain, and in France, one cannot pretend to foretell. Certainly, we must revise our ideas of the degree of culture possessed by inhabitants of Europe hundreds of centuries ago.³⁷ Connect this with all

³⁶ See Friedrich von der Leyen, *Das Märchen*, 1913, for the development of the European popular tale. Adolf Thimme, *Das Märchen*, 1912, has a bibliography.

³⁷ *L'Anthropologie*, Vol. xv, with reproductions of the pictures.

our knowledge of the migrations of Europe, and we have untold possibilities of tracing the source and progress of ideas, beliefs, and perchance of plots. When all these complicated matters are understood (if ever they can be understood) we may then see the interchange of ideas giving and taking, where we now can see only the nebulous process of independent origin. It behooves us to make the attempt at least, and in this way give substance and consistency to such admirable work as that of Panzer³⁸ and Chadwick³⁹ in Germanic tradition, and of Dähnhardt⁴⁰ in Aryan traditions.

I have said that the anthropologists of to-day, both descriptive and theoretical, give much less attention to the dances of savages than did those of an earlier generation; and we find that men like Bücher⁴¹ and Haddon⁴² connect the origin of art with aspects of life which we are likely to regard as non-æsthetic—Bücher connecting poetry with labor, and Haddon connecting representative art with actual objects and the process of decorative transformation of them—the “skeuomorphic” process, as he calls it. Both these theories (and they are of great importance in their implications) are directly opposed to the communal theory, or theory of the festal origin of poetry, which has as its fundamental assumption the play theory of the origin of art.

See also succeeding volumes for palæolithic materials. Robert Munro, *Palæolithic Man*, 1912, and Lord Avebury, *Prehistoric Times*, 1913, have good selections from *L'Anthropologie*.

³⁸ Friedrich Panzer, *Hilde-Gudrun*, 1901; *Studien zur Germanischen Sagensgeschichte*, Vol. I (Beowulf), 1910. (Valuable folk-tale bibliographies in both volumes.)

³⁹ H. M. Chadwick, *The Heroic Age*, 1907.

⁴⁰ O. Dähnhardt, *Natursagen*, 4 vols., 1907-1913.

⁴¹ Carl Bücher, *Arbeit und Rhythmus*, 3rd ed., 1909.

⁴² Alfred C. Haddon, *Evolution in Art*, 1907.

In conclusion, it would seem that the ballad, *as we have it*, is a distinct and individual phenomenon, appearing at a definite time in definite portions of Western Europe, through explicable causes, from 1100 to 1450, by borrowing from France in the first place and then by borrowing and re-borrowing. But it does not appear everywhere in Western Europe: Iceland, Italy south of Piedmont, and portions of Spain have no ballads.⁴³ These lands had dances, but other forms of literature absorbed the artistic capabilities of the people and the dances did not burst into blossom and fruit. They withered away, or remained stunted growths and unprofitable. More may be said: we have no warrant for saying that if they had resulted in literary form, the literary form would have been our ballad. Quite the contrary; for wherever we do not find this definite Western European tradition, we have not ballads in our sense. Eastern Europe has something like ballads, but they are not in form like our ballad. They represent a different tradition. Indeed, when we consider the great body of folk-lore which makes up the content of the ballad, when we contemplate the vast mass of folk thought, folk custom, ritual, and belief, the ballad becomes a very little thing, an almost accidental thing, as every form of art is, related to the tales and traditions, dramas and epics, of the people; but young and modern, yet of the old blood; and so precious as another example of the race of man ever tending to break forth into song when favored with the proper environment and instructors.

ARTHUR BEATTY.

⁴³ Count Nigra, *Canti Popolari del Piemonte*, 1888. Mila y Fontanals, *De la Poesia heróico-popular Castellana*, 1874. Menéndez y Pelayo, *Tratado de los Romances viejos*, 2 vols., 1903-6.